

I ever saw a dedication to public service—dedicated his life to public service.

Senator EDWARD M. KENNEDY, TED KENNEDY, has spent more than half of his life in the Senate. I have done that, too. I was just contemplating and figuring in my head. Yes, that is a long time. He has spent more than half of his life in the Senate, yes. Yes, I have spent more than half of mine, but I am not the subject of this.

He, TED KENNEDY, is now second in seniority in the Senate. He, TED KENNEDY, is the third longest serving Senator in the history of the United States of America.

As I wish my dear friend TED KENNEDY the happiest of birthdays, perhaps I should point out that our relationship—his and mine—did not begin—I think I have already hinted at that—on the friendliest of terms. I first encountered TED KENNEDY during the bitter and famous 1960 West Virginia Democratic primary. TED KENNEDY was in the State helping his brother John F. Kennedy, who was running for President. I, ROBERT C. BYRD, was supporting the other guy.

In 1971, he, TED KENNEDY, was running for reelection to his position as the Senate Democratic whip. Again, I supported the other guy—me.

In 1976, I was running for the position of Senate majority leader. This time, he, TED KENNEDY, was supporting the other guy.

This hardly seemed the beginning of a beautiful relationship, but it was.

During our service together in the Senate, I came to admire TED KENNEDY—yes, I came to admire him—as a dedicated Senator of incredible tenacity and admirable legislative skills. I found him to be an indefatigable worker who could accomplish, yes, what seemed to be legislative miracles. Sometimes they were.

I, personally, will always be grateful for the support, the unstinting support, that Senator TED KENNEDY gave to me during the years that it was my privilege to serve, yes, serve as the Senate Democratic leader. And I was. I was the leader, the Senate Democratic leader. When times got tough, as they sometimes do for a Senate leader, I knew that I could always count—I could always count; yes, even without asking him, I knew where he stood—I could always count on him. It may have been a needed vote. It may have been his assistance in building support for a legislative proposal. Whatever was needed, he, EDWARD M. KENNEDY, TED, was there. He was there, he was always there for me, and I am grateful. As a result, our friendship has developed and strengthened.

Today I am proud to call TED KENNEDY one of my best and dearest friends. I have to say he is my best and dearest friend. I will always value his friendship. I especially appreciate the way he has extended that friendship not only to me but also to all the people of West Virginia. And he did much of that before he became a friend of mine.

I close this brief statement about admiration for TED KENNEDY with these words:

“How far away is the temple of fame?”
Said a youth at the dawn of the day.
He toiled and strove for a deathless name;
The hours went by and the evening came,
Leaving him old and feeble and lame,
To plod on his cheerless way.

“How far away is the temple of good?”
Said another youth at the dawn of the day.
He toiled in the spirit of brotherhood,
To help and succor as best he could
The poor and unfortunate multitude,
In its hard and cheerless way.

He was careless alike of praise or blame,
But after his work was done,
An angel of glory from heaven came
To write on high his immortal name,
And to proclaim the truth that the temple of
fame

And the temple of good are one.

For this is the lesson that history
Has taught since the world began;
That those whose memories never die,
But shine like stars in the human sky,
And brighter glow as the years go by,
Are the men who live for man.

Senator TED KENNEDY is a public servant. He is a dedicated legislator. He is a great Senator of our times who endeavors to live for his fellow man.

Happy birthday, TED KENNEDY. God bless you. Because of you, we are a better country.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

HONORING VINCE KIROL, DARCY DENGEL, AND PAUL ERICKSON

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, I rise today in honor of three Montanans, three true public servants and American heroes who passed away last week in my home State of Montana.

Today, Senator BAUCUS and I grieve with the city of Great Falls and the State of Montana. I ask that we keep the families of the three victims of a Mercy Flight air ambulance crash in our thoughts and prayers. Their colleagues at Benefis Hospital in Great Falls and across my State are mourning, remembering, and honoring the lives of Vince Kirol, Darcy Dengel, and Paul Erickson.

Vince, Darcy, and Paul died when their plane went down on a routine flight from Great Falls to Bozeman Tuesday night to pick up a patient. I ask that we in this body hold these three in highest esteem as public servants who selflessly risked their own lives to help others.

Vince Kirol was a pilot for 40 years. He flew for Mercy Flight the last 12 of those years. Vince has left an everlasting footprint on Montana.

Darcy Dengel, a registered flight nurse, was only 27 years of age. She was engaged to be married to a Great Falls police officer. Darcy will not be forgotten.

Paul Erickson was a Great Falls firefighter and paramedic. We will never forget the service Paul left behind. It has changed lives forever.

In this body, we speak often of the value of public service. These three Montanans lived it every day. Too often, we are reminded of the sacrifices of our first responders, firefighters, police officers, nurses, and doctors. I ask my colleagues and all Americans to take a moment, when we can, to thank those who put their lives on the line serving this country at home. We owe them so much.

With great respect for these fine three Montanans, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

SENATOR KENNEDY

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from West Virginia for his comments about my colleague, Senator KENNEDY, who I know, if he were here, would be equally grateful. I am not going to be addressing the issue of Senator KENNEDY's birthday today. I will do so tomorrow. But we are all grateful for Senator BYRD and what he represents in the Senate. There is nobody who knows the record of my colleague better, who has served with him longer, or who has been through more battles with him than Senator BYRD. We are grateful for those comments.

IRAQ

Mr. KERRY. Four years ago, as we all know too well, we sent our young men and women to Iraq for a war that many of us now believe was a grave and tragic mistake. Day after day, month after month, the administration has repeatedly exacerbated that mistake by leaving our soldiers in the field without the equipment and without the protection they need and deserve, knowing full well what the lethal consequences would be.

There will be and there is disagreement in this body over the next difficult steps to take in Iraq. We can disagree on troop numbers. We can disagree on a timetable. We can disagree on the shape of a future political settlement in Iraq. Surely, we can all recognize those are honest differences of opinion. But there is no difference of opinion and there is no disagreement here that we ought to be giving our troops absolutely everything they need in order to accomplish this mission. There is no disagreement that those troops deserve everything they need to be as safe as possible, and there should be no disagreement that when we ask young men and women to leave their families to fight deadly foreign enemies halfway across the globe, when we ask them to put their lives on the line, the least we owe them is the equipment they need to protect themselves and get the job done. One soldier dying from a roadside bomb because he or she does not have the body armor is one too many.

The fact is, when it comes to body armor, when it comes to armored vehicles in Iraq, our troops do not have